

Survey on Public and Charitable Assistance

University of Wyoming

January 2019

One role of the Staff Senate is to "involve staff senators in University administration and to increase awareness of staff problems and opportunities" (UW Regulation 1-3). In order to enhance its effectiveness in communicating staff concerns, the Senate occasionally conducts staff surveys. The current survey was conducted in January 2019 and deployed via email directly to UW staff.

The survey received a total of 437 responses over a three week period. Of those responses, 429 indicated that they were full-time UW staff. Since this survey is primarily focused on full-time UW staff, most of the information below reflects only those 429 respondents.

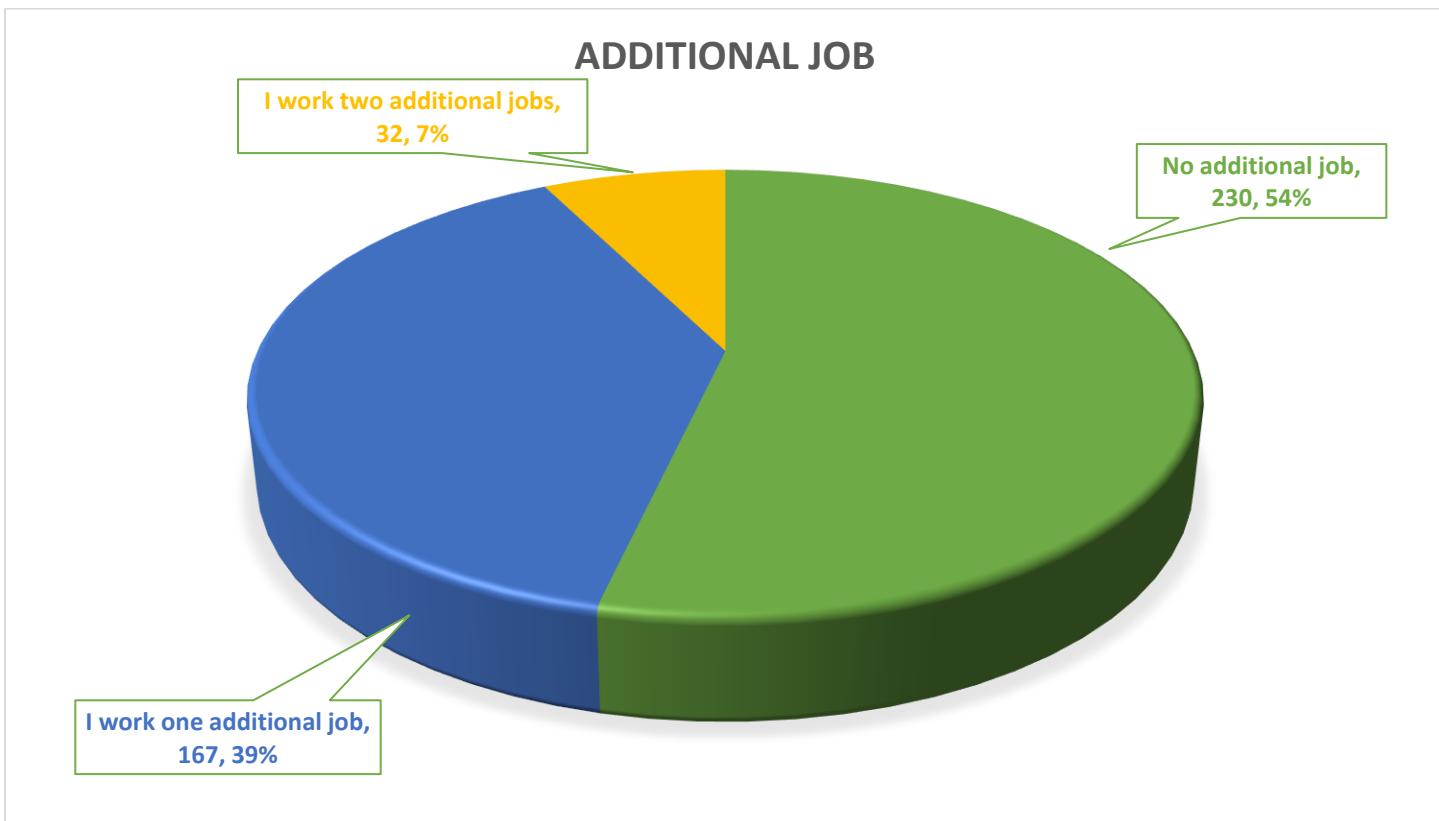
Question 1

Are you a full-time UW staff employee?

Yes	429
No	8
Total	437

Question 2

Do you have another job in addition to employment at UW?



Question 3

Is anyone in your household currently receiving any form of public assistance? Please check all that apply.

Housing assistance (Section 8, public housing, etc.)

Food assistance (SNAP, WIC)

Childcare subsidy

Energy assistance (LIEAP)

Medicaid

Kid Care CHIP

Head Start

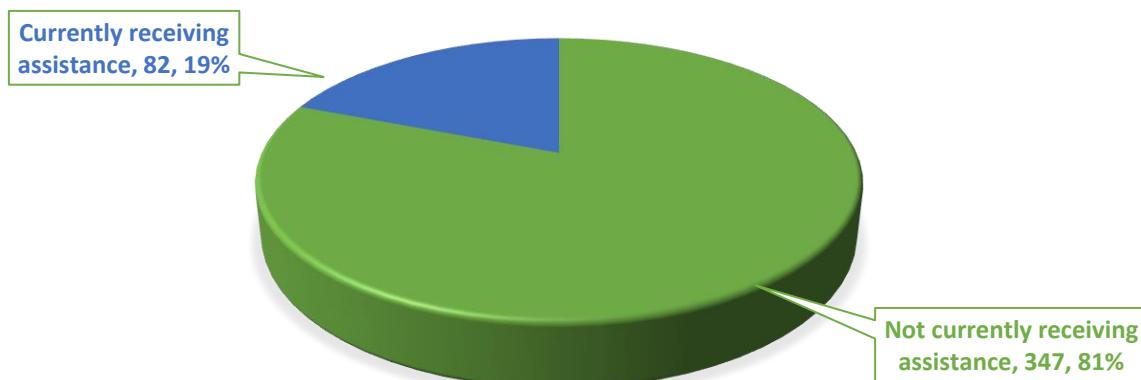
Free/reduced lunch program

Telephone assistance (TAP)

Not currently receiving assistance

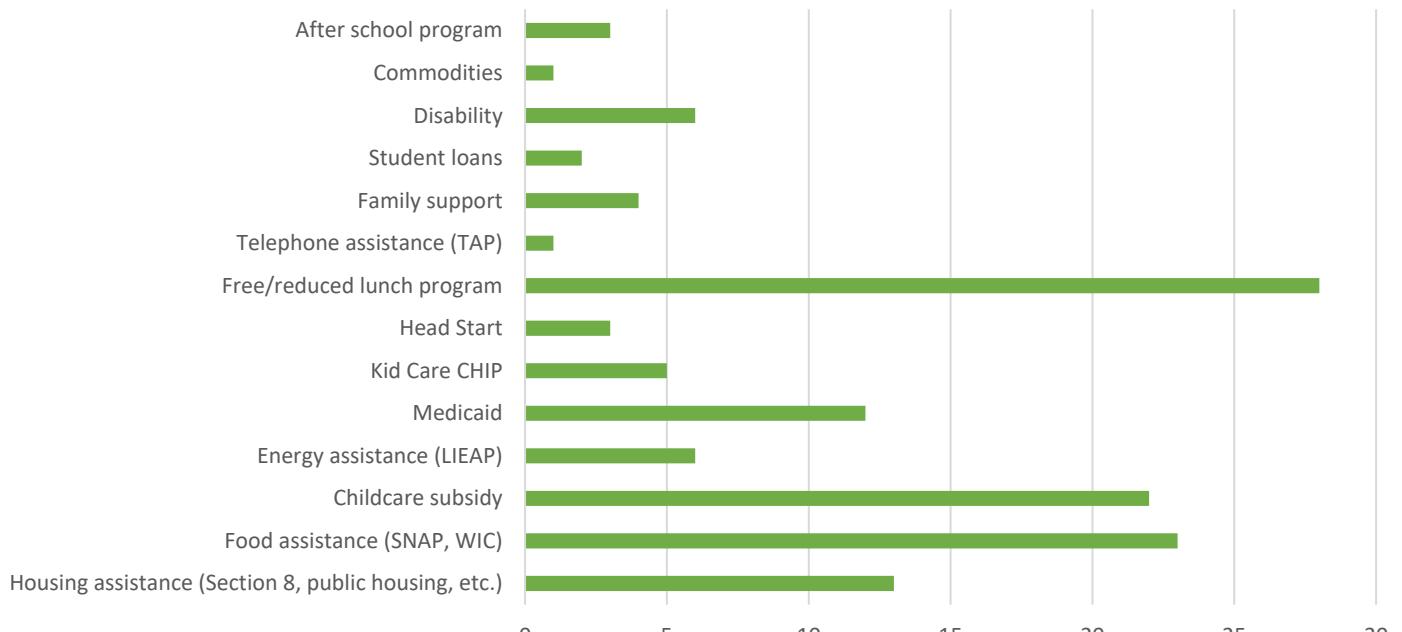
Other, please specify

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, CURRENT



Current Assistance

82 Individuals, multiple responses possible

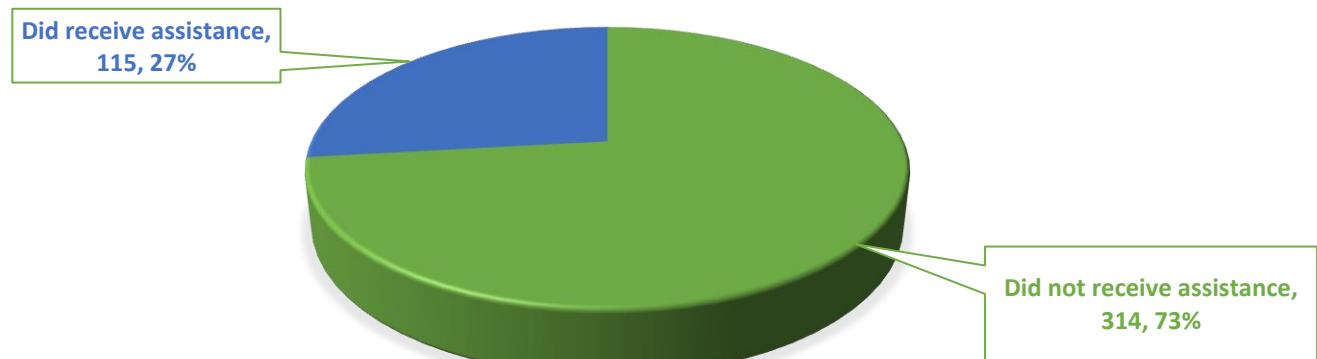


Question 4

In the past five years, has anyone in your household received any form of public assistance **while you were employed full time at UW?** Please check all that apply.

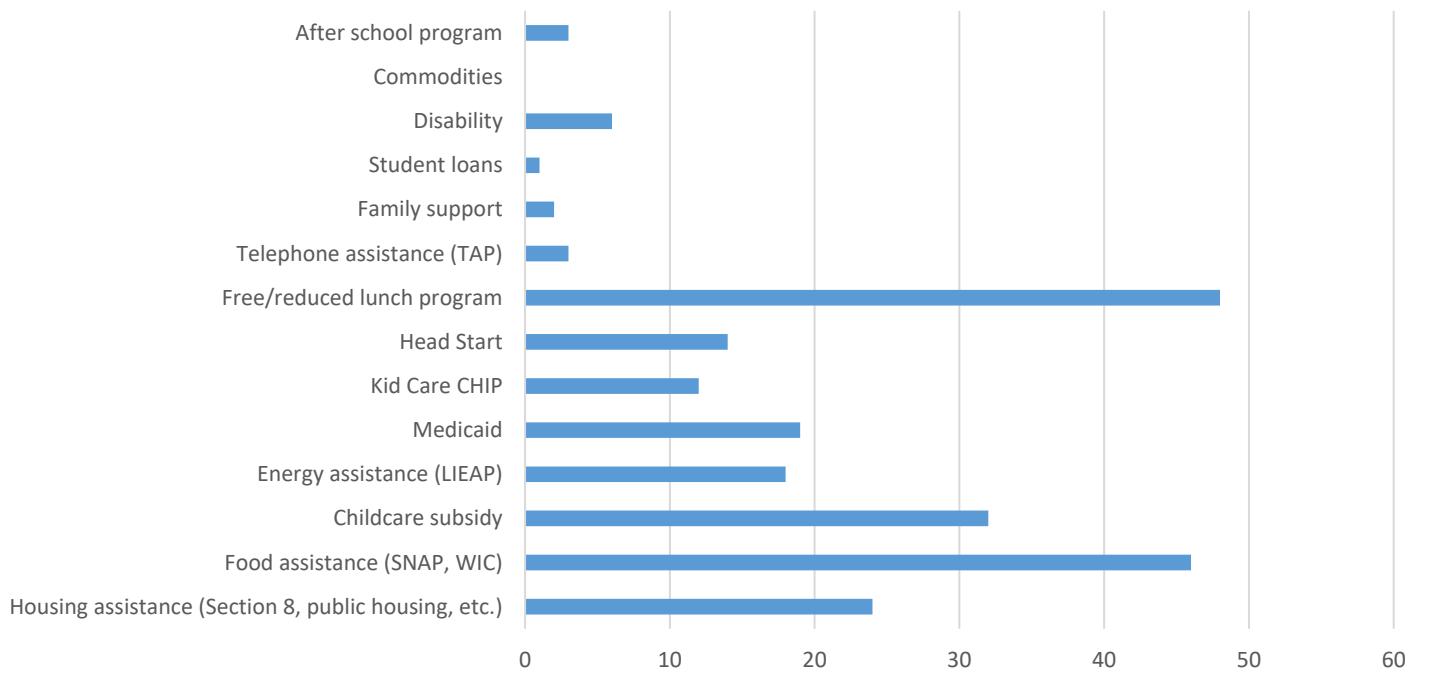
- Housing assistance (Section 8, public housing, etc.)
- Food assistance (SNAP, WIC)
- Childcare subsidy
- Energy assistance (LIEAP)
- Medicaid
- Kid Care CHIP
- Head Start
- Free/reduced lunch program
- Telephone assistance (TAP)
- Not currently receiving assistance
- Other, please specify

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, PAST 5 YEARS



Received Assistance, Past 5 Years

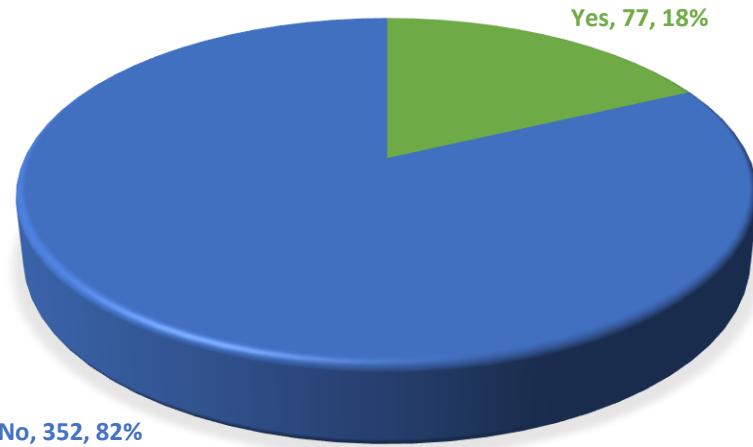
115 Individuals, multiple responses possible



Question 5

In the past 12 months, have you made use of local services such as Interfaith Good Samaritan, the Soup Kitchen, or another church or community group's food or clothing bank **while you were employed full time at UW?**

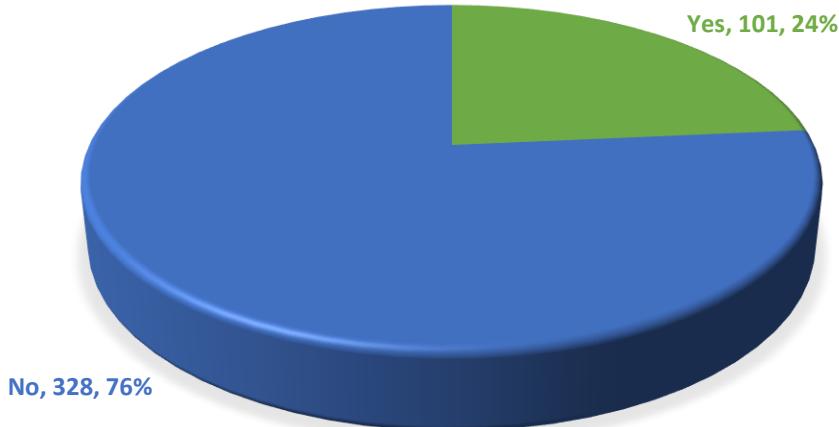
FOOD OR CLOTHING BANK



Question 6

In the past 12 months, has anyone in your household received care from low-cost services such as the Downtown Clinic, the Community Health Clinic or Peak Wellness **while you were employed full time at UW?**

LOW-COST CARE



Question 7

Is there anything else on the topic of UW staff utilization of public and charitable assistance that you would like us to know? [selected responses]

- This is also about fairness in pay just not where you are paid enough not to have to receive charitable assistance. I have a two income earner household.

- On Call employees can't hold an extra job to fill in the 20 percent salary gap. Please bring us up to market.
- I had to access vocational rehabilitation in order to pay for hearing aids. Could not afford them otherwise and it was necessary for my job because I had to have assistive technology devices to do what is expected of me.
- We are eligible for the WIC and reduced the lunch program but don't use them.
- One of the advantages of working at UW is that we get Saturday and Sunday off to work a second or third job.
- I do not have children, which I believe allows me to have a good standard of life on my salary. I do not believe that I could maintain this if I had to support dependents, however.
- Some other state agencies give a housing allowance for low-paid employees in counties where the cost of housing is high relative to the rest of the state. I would like Staff Senate to look into the possibility of getting a housing subsidy for low-paid employees in Albany County.
- When the cost of living/inflation/health care/retirement rises at a higher rate than salary increases these services are often necessary to survive.
- I have not made use of local services for food. However, during my first several years working at the university I would purposely attend campus and community lectures and events in which food was served so that I could afford to eat. For the most part those events were very enjoyable and I'm happy I attended because I learned a great deal, but I must be honest about my motivation for attending. I'm fortunate enough to have some support from my parents, but at this stage in my life it's embarrassing to have worked at UW for years and still struggle to make ends meet some months.
- I work the extra jobs so that I don't have to receive assistance. It would be nice if I didn't have to work these extra jobs to provide for my family. When the cost of living goes up and our pay doesn't it makes it very hard to provide for your family.
- While I have never had to get second job or utilize public/charitable assistance there have been multiple times in the last few years I have looked into them as possible options. And I am single, no kids or a house or even a car, so the fact that I had to fret about minimal expenses while being employed full time is...well, it's not great.
- Instead of trying to make a case that we're so poorly paid, we need public assistance, why not just do a simple comparison with the other state agency pay tables? My same job in any other executive branch agency makes at least \$1000 more per month at the minimum level and I'm supposedly over market value at UW. This is NOT about who needs public assistance - this is truly about job & pay equality - same job=same pay. I'm really sick of hearing about how many 'conversations' have been had over this issue. This issue is very black and white - show them the pay tables and demand that we be paid equally. We continue to pander to these so-called 'perceptions' and do all this extra work just to get what we should already be entitled to. The pay tables already exist so why does this matter who uses public assistance? Pay people what they are entitled to and let's move on to other matters. Note - I worked in another agency when the State's new pay and classification system was adopted by the Legislature. Nobody understood why UW was not part of the overhaul then, and I still don't understand why the staff at UW didn't make a stink when they realized that they were cheated. Now FYI - Many people who are eligible do not take advantage of these services because of the stigma and shaming involved. I have been eligible in the past and refused to seek help for this exact reason. In addition, this is a small community and nobody wants their co-workers to know that they are receiving assistance in any form. I was raised that taking handouts is for 'poor' people. We simply did without and saved the charity for those 'who really needed it.' I'm sure I'm not the only one who thinks that way. Hope someone is listening and this is not waste effort, yet again.
- If my husband did not have a good paying job, I would need to take an additional job just to cover my monthly bills. Mortgage, utilities, and phone are more than my monthly check from UW. My home is a modest 1800 square foot ranch style, three bedroom, two bath.

- If I was trying to live on my salary only I would have to ask for assistance because what I make is below poverty level.
- Staff salaries should be at minimum brought to market standard so additional jobs and assistance are not needed, and more time can actually be spent living and being with family. Faculty and staff make the University run, not the executives who receive high wages.
- I have maxed out several credit cards in order to not have to get food or utility assistance. This year my salary barely went over the limit for lunch assistance for my child at school, full rate is expensive and we have had to ask for extensions on payments.
- I am now one of 3 of the lowest paid medical professionals in the state. I am also one of the most experienced medical professionals in the state. My salary is pathetic and is at least 35% below the national average for a Family Practice medical professional. With my current salary I have become a paycheck to paycheck employee. It is demoralizing and depressing to complete medical school and be so grossly under-compensated. I do have 2 other part time jobs and am currently looking into other job opportunities due to my extremely low salary.
- You don't necessarily have to be on public assistance to still be struggling. Many of us manage because we work multiple jobs. So it gives the impression we are 'okay' financially when we are still living paycheck to paycheck.
- UW benefited employees do not qualify for the Downtown Clinic because they have insurance even though many of them may base on annual income. Our employees use their insurance at the hospital/healthcare providers but cannot pay the deductible and co-pays. Many of them are on payment plans and a few are having their wages garnished to pay medical bills incurred using insurance.
- In the past few years, I have occasionally had to rely on crowdsourcing, gifts from relatives, or loans from friends to bridge a gap. I make too much on paper to qualify for public assistance, but my paycheck is insufficient to cover all of my necessary expenses each month. I have had medical emergencies for which I was never quite able to pay my out-of-pocket deductible and copay. Per the Economic Policy Institute's calculator, the cost of a basic necessities standard of living for one adult in Albany County, Wyoming is \$35,303. For two adults and one child, that goes up to \$68,725. It does not account for things like student loans or ongoing medical expenses not covered by insurance, so, in order to ensure that all employees are paid enough to afford to actually live in our community, \$35/hr. should be the very bottom of the pay scale. We fall well short of that. Source: <https://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>
- The currently and last five years effected my response. When I first started as a full time, salaried employee for the UW (about 15 years ago) my spouse was in school. We received charity dental care (thanks Dr. Willis), significant financial aid, and utilized some of the community resources mentioned. We also lived with my parents for an extended period in order to be able to save up the money to break into the low end of the Laramie housing market.
- I am a staff member who volunteers at the local food pantry operated by Interfaith Good Samaritan. I regularly see a substantial number of full-time UW employees who pick up food to help them get by. The salary they receive from UW is not sufficient to provide adequate food for them and their families. I am aware of full-time UW employees who need assistance paying for basic living expenses such as rent and fuel for their vehicles. It is deplorable that UW spends so much money on new buildings and new programs and does not pay fair and competitive salaries to many of their staff members.
- If you paid us a reasonable and competitive salary for the work being done, people might be more apt to give a little more. Most UW staff can hardly afford to pay their own bills, let alone give the little hard earned money they are receiving from UW to a charitable place. UW has made a culture of doing the minimum because you will not receive the money that you deserve or have worked hard for.
- Just because we pay our own way doesn't mean we are earning a fair wage.
- For number 2, I put that I didn't have another job, but I do pick up occasional side hustles/gigs to help save money. Teaching online, completing surveys, dog sitting, etc.

- With no significant raises for grant funded positions for several years, and with higher insurance costs and deductibles disposable incomes have dropped. With surrounding states offering significantly better compensation, we will start losing highly qualified staff.
- I'm lucky I have my parents, I know too many on campus who have multiple jobs and cannot make it with just their UW pay check, especially in January.
- I do not use public or charitable assistance. I live in my mother's rental house and she gives me a huge break on the rent. She could easily charge over \$1000 for this house, but I pay only \$500. This rent money is set aside to use for repairs on the house if needed. I do not live in an expensive part of town. I cannot afford to go on vacation. I eat at home more than I go out, I don't go to concerts or movies. My last two vehicles were 15 years old and 21 years old. I try to keep expenses down and I am barely breaking even. I can't afford a smart phone. I try not to carry any debt on credit cards, but sometimes things happen (car repairs, emergency room/hospital stay) and that is the only way I can afford things. I try to pay the credit cards right away. If things get any tighter, I will be on food stamps. I have worked at the university for quite a number of years and that is my fault. I kept thinking things would get better. My bad.
- I am eligible for Kid Care but have been told that since I am a state employee, I have to pay for state insurance for my child even though I am income eligible to be on Kid Care. It is rather disappointing that because the state is the organization that doesn't pay a livable salary that I can't obtain the programs to help my family out.
- Until about two years ago, I did have a 2nd job. That changed with finally receiving a promotional position.
- I am currently trying to find a second job in order to make ends meet. I am willing to be demoted to a custodian 1 if it allows for a second job.
- Some staff are too Wyoming, that is ruggedly independent to the point of stupidity, in that they will not accept public assistance. This mindset needs to change, especially if the legislature continues to ignore the disparity between what UW staff are paid and comparable Wyoming state employees.
- As a grant that assists low-income individuals, I would qualify to receive services through the grant I work for before my husband got his promotion. Additionally, I encourage individuals to get a college education. Using the standard education/income breakdown, I fall about \$12,000 below the average Bachelor's degree holding person. It is difficult to encourage others to get a college education and stress that they will make more money when my income is about that of a high school graduate based on the average breakdown. It was quite insulting to see that millions were given in raises last year, but my income was so low, that of those millions, I received \$240 total for the year despite the fact that I have above average performance evaluations and the grant has been given an increase each year to help retain employees, however, that money hasn't been directed to us because of the freeze.
- The low staff salaries, which have fallen far below true inflation, have prevented me from contributing to charities local and global that I would like to and has hurt the community overall.
- No matter how much I have made in my life, even when I qualified for these assistance programs, I never used them. I provided for myself and adjusted my lifestyle or worked more than one job to get by.
- My salary is too high to receive most of these services. When I first became employed by UW 15 or so years ago, my salary was more than adequate. However, the cost of living/inflation continues to rise every year and the raises are a drop in the bucket (really a slap in the face) at best. I now live paycheck to paycheck and am usually a month or more behind on at least one bill. So, while I'm better off than most staff members who employ these services, I live in constant financial stress. Salaries need to be adjusted periodically for inflation, independent of performance reviews. NOTHING else will address the problem.
- While my family has not received any assistance, we have had to make work schedules fit so that daycare can be affordable to our family. This means that we make a huge sacrifice of family life so that we can afford our bills. Just because we don't ask for a hand up doesn't mean we are not struggling.
- I live alone so a lot of these questions don't apply to me. I do get supplementary food sometimes and I work a part-time job, when hours are available. It's not easy to find part-time work that fits into a UW schedule.

- Much of my staff get some kind of assistance because their job doesn't pay enough for them to live off. This I know because I have to fill out a lot of forms every semester for assisted housing and energy assistance. I myself have received much help because the income I make even as a manager is horrible, if I lived in another state I would be getting much more a year. It is sad when most people in my department (RLDS) can't afford to buy a home even as a benefited employee. Catch up with the times and realize the location of your employees, Laramie is an expensive city to live in compared to other cities in Wyoming.
- While we have not had to use these services in the past year, we do live paycheck-to-paycheck, cannot save money for a down payment for a house, and have to plan specifically for any large expenses. It would not take but one big emergency for us to have to utilize these public or community assistance programs to survive.
- I am in the process of relocating to a higher paying, lower cost city because I cannot continue to work in Laramie, at UW, and support my family at the salary I am currently receiving. It is not even close to a livable wage for this position, in this locale.
- In the past 3 years I have qualified for public assistance for my family because my low pay but I did not use the services.
- I make too much to qualify myself for SNAP and other Public Assistance Programs but my salary at UW I don't make enough to see me through the month with rent and other bills.
- I know a UW employee who works an additional job, who's currently receiving public assistance, who's received public assistance in the past five years, and who's used clothing bank services in the past 12 months.
- Even though I have not used any of the services mentioned above, it is nice to know they are available as we continued to struggle to make a living wage (without the second job) if needed.
- I have been at UW 7 years and have never had a raise (although I do the work of 4 FT people).
- We work full time at the uw and its sad to hear how many people have to use public assistance. I live paycheck to paycheck with two jobs. Sad
- There is a custodian in our shop that was asking for stale donuts off the break table due to being hungry. This comes a full 2 weeks before payday.
- The bills are going up and the pay is the same or goes backwards!!! I have thought of using LIEP with my heating bills. Too proud!! I'll work 2 or 3 jobs!! Would be nice to work just one!!
- A lot of times, we make just barely too much to qualify for public assistance, but not enough to ever feel comfortable. My spouse and I both work a second job in addition to working at UW full-time. If we didn't have these jobs, we'd struggle to make ends meet.
- It would be a good idea to offer assistance to more employees to learn about the options available to them to get assistance.
- The only reason I have not utilized any public assistance or am working a second job is because I have a renter. If I did not have my renter, I WOULD be working a second job and inquiring about public assistance.
- We moved to Laramie from the Midwest, and upon doing so took a 50% pay cut to live here. Both my husband and myself have much lower paying jobs here, and our housing expense doubled! We don't go on vacations, have older vehicles, shop at goodwill, and live very, very conservatively. Many of my coworkers are on public assistance, can't pay all their bills, and get foodstamps. We have a very tight budget that we stick to. I do not understand the disparity between different groups at the University, why some make so much, and some not enough to survive. If something happened to my husband, I could not even come close to living on my salary.
- While I do not work a second job to make ends meet, my spouse is also employed at the University of Wyoming and they do.
- If I was not able to have a second job I would probably need some of these services. In Laramie, WY \$13 hr is poverty level. If I did not love my job and the students I support I would have moved on from the University.
- I think uw should donate some of the unused food from both food places on campus to the soup kitchen to help those less fortunate. I see a lot of food go to waste daily and think it could be put to use somehow.